GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
WATER RESOURCES
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:273
ANSWERED ON:10.03.2003
CONFERENCE OF WATER RESOURCES MINISTERS
KAMBALAPADU E. KRISHNAMURTHY;V. VETRISELVAN

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the 12th National Conference of Water Resources Ministers was held recently;

(b) if so, the details and outcome thereof;

(c) whether some State Governments have expressed their views against implementation of inter-linking of rivers project in their States as the project is detrimental to their water management position; and

(d) if so, the reaction of the Union Government thereto?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI)

(a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) of STARRED QUESTION NO. 273 TO BE ANSWERED IN LOK SABHA ON 10.3.2003 REGARDING CONFERENCE OF WATER RESOURCES MINISTERS

(a) & (b) The 12th National Conference of Water Resources and Irrigation Ministers was held on 5th February, 2003 at New Delhi. The Agenda for the Conference included Vision for Integrated Water Resources Development and Management; Review of Performance of Ninth Plan and Strategy for Tenth Plan; Action Plan for Implementation of National Water Policy, 2002; Need for Water Sector Reform by way of Performance Improvement, Rationalisation of Water Rates, Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP) for expeditious completion of Ongoing, Major and Medium Projects, River Basin Organisations; Command Area Development Programme and Participatory Irrigation Management; Inter-Basin Transfer Links Studied by National Water Development Agency and Setting up of Third Irrigation Commission.

The Hon'ble Prime Minister released the Document on "Vision for Integrated Water Resources Development and Management" in the Curtain Raiser of Launching the Freshwater Year, 2003 held prior to the Conference.

The Action Plan for Implementation of the National Water Policy, 2002 has been adopted in the conference. It has also been decided that certain States, who have not formulated their State Water Policy, will formulate its own State Water Policy backed with an operational action plan within two years as per provisions of the National Water Policy, 2002. It was agreed that all-out efforts would be made by all concerned to meet the objectives set for the Water Resources Sector in the Tenth Plan document adopted by National Development Council. Reforms required in the water sector are key to the economic sustainability of the irrigation systems. Initiatives towards sector reforms as discussed in the Conference and those detailed in the Tenth Plan document is required to be taken up with right earnestness. Reform measures including rationalisation of water rates are also important aspects of Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme as special incentives are being provided for such measures for funding of schemes. The Restructured programme of the Command Area Development will be pursued further. The States will make all-out efforts in the implementation of the restructured programme. Participatory Irrigation Management is central to the sustainable management of irrigation systems as also for improving their efficiency.

Recognising this, the implementation of the CAD Programme is closely linked with Participatory Irrigation Management, wherein beneficiaries are required to bear a small part of the overall costs.

(c) & (d) On the issue of inter-linking of rivers, the representatives of some of the States did express their reservation on some grounds. With a view to bringing about a consensus among the States, the Central Government has set-up a Task Force under the Chairmanship of Shri Suresh Prabhu, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) on December 13, 2002 towards expediting the inter-inking proposal with the following terms of reference: -

(i) Provide guidance on norms of appraisal of individual projects in respect of economic viability, socio-economic impacts, environmental impacts and preparation of resettlement plans;

(ii) Devise suitable mechanism for bringing about speedy consensus amongst the States;

(iii) Prioritize the different project components for preparation of Detailed Project Reports and implementation;

(iv) Propose suitable organizational structure for implementing the project;

(v) Consider various modalities for project funding; and

(vi) Consider international dimensions that may be involved in some project components.